



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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Hawaii Tobacco Sales to Minors Among the Lowest in the Nation

HONOLULU – This year’s survey by the Department of Health’s Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) shows tobacco sales to minors continue to be low across the state. The University of Hawaii’s Cancer Research Center of Hawaii and ADAD conduct federally mandated annual inspections of retail outlets that sell tobacco to determine the extent of illegal sales of tobacco products to youth under age 18. In the most recent federal release (2004), Hawaii ranked third (tied with Maine) among the most successful states with only Delaware and Arkansas producing better results.

“Over the last ten years, the rates of illegal tobacco sales in Hawaii have dropped from 44.5% to 5.9%” said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. “Our comprehensive tobacco prevention strategy has played a major role in getting Hawaii to maintain one of the lowest rates in the nation for seven consecutive years.”

Earlier this year, teams made up of youth volunteers, ages 15-17, and adult observers visited a random sample of 221 stores in which the youth attempted to buy cigarettes to determine how well retailers were complying with the state tobacco laws. Thirteen stores sold to minors. The 2006 non-compliance rates around the state are 9.7% for Hawaii County, 7.4% for Maui County, 5.3% for the City and County of Honolulu, and 0% for Kauai County.

Today, Lt. Governor James R. “Duke” Aiona, Jr. joined Director of Health Chiyome Fukino to recognize the students who volunteered their time to the annual inspections.

“The youth volunteers involved in this inspection are helping to protect the health of their peers by reminding retailers that it’s illegal to sell tobacco to minors,” said Lt. Governor Aiona. “The best way to reduce the chances of our young people becoming addicted to tobacco is to prevent them from starting smoking in the first place.”

In addition to the survey inspections, the DOH, in cooperation with all four county police departments and the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii, has a program to enforce the State law that prohibits the sale or furnishing of tobacco products to a minor under the age of 18. The enforcement program uses teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17, carrying identification, who attempt to purchase cigarettes under the supervision of an undercover police officer. Approximately 1,200 enforcement inspections are conducted every year aimed at all outlets in the State that sell tobacco. Salesclerks convicted of selling to minors face a mandatory fine of \$500.

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